

GUIDE TO THE NN11 CREEK FILE

[This file is concerned with the Muskogean-speaking Indians of the Creek Confederacy. The confederacy constituted the principal political element in the territory of the present states of Georgia and Alabama from the sixteenth century through the early nineteenth century. The Creeks were divided geographically into two parts, one called the Upper Creeks, on the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers', the other called the Lower Creeks, on the lower Chattahoochee and Ocmulgee Rivers. The confederacy was broken up by the removal of most of its members to the present state of Oklahoma during the 1830's. Therefore, the materials in the file represent in part a historical reconstruction of Creek culture during this period, supplemented by materials from Creek settlers in Oklahoma. There were numerous tribes included in the confederacy, including the Creek proper (or Muskogee), Alabama and Hitchiti, as well as many other smaller groups.

There are three sources in the Creek file, all written by the same man, John R. Swanton, an anthropologist who was the acknowledged expert on the Indian tribes of the Southeastern United States. 1: Swanton deals with social organization and social usages, and touches upon traditional history, towns and town organization, law and government, and general customs. 2: Swanton is concerned with medical practices and religious beliefs, with information being included on cosmology, mythology, eschatology, ceremonies, supernatural beings, shamanism and medicine. 3: Swanton is a historically reconstructed description of the traditional arrangement of several Muskogee square grounds.

This file contains the essential data on the culture of these Indians and is adequate for many cross-cultural research purposes. However, because of the great time depth and of the many tribal units involved in the file, special care should be taken to insure comparability of materials. Swanton worked both from historical records and from modern informants and was a careful anthropologist, so the data should be fairly reliable. The file does give a good picture of Creek life and culture, and was processed in 1956.]